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ABSTRACT

Because children today are growing up in an era of increasing racial and ethnic diversity and because television provides a steady educational influence on children's attitudes and perceptions, it is important to examine the extent to which television programming reflects diversity in all its forms. This study was commissioned by Children Now to provide television networks with information on the diversity in race, gender, disability, and sexuality reflected in 1999-2000 prime time programming. A content analysis was conducted of the first 3 new episodes of each prime time entertainment series airing in fall 1999 on the 6 broadcast networks. Program content was analyzed for genre, rating, and cast diversity, with each primary and secondary character examined for gender, race, occupation, marital status, and sexual orientation. A total of 1,477 characters across 274 episodes of 92 different programs were examined. Key findings include the following: (1) actors of color playing guest or non-recurring roles account for much of the racial diversity; (2) almost half the programs have all white casts in opening credits; (3) all networks demonstrated substantial numbers of programs with diversity when the entire cast was considered; (4) diversity diminished when focusing on recurring characters; (5) youth characters were more likely to be white than the overall television population; (6) female characters' occupations were polarized between professional and traditional; (7) characters with noticeable disabilities were equally recurring and non-recurring and overwhelmingly white; and (8) almost all openly gay/lesbian characters were male. (A list of the programs sampled is appended.) (KB)

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FALL COLORS

How Diverse is the 1999-2000 TV Season's Prime Time Lineup?

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Amy Dominguez-Arms

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HIGHLIGHTS

RACIAL & ETHNIC DIVERSITY

- **Actors of color playing *guest* roles or *non-recurring* characters account for much of prime time programming's existing racial diversity.**
  When examining all the characters in prime time entertainment (i.e., all primary, secondary, recurring, and non-recurring roles), 61% of the shows have diverse, mixed casts. However, when examining only the recurring characters, under 40% have that same mixed composition. Finally, looking only at the characters in the opening credits, only 17% have mixed composition. In short, programming diversity disappears as you focus on the more important and central characters.

- **Almost half of the shows on prime time have *all white* casts in the opening credits.**
  Correspondingly, many opening credits casts (i.e., primary recurring characters) are all white. While only 16% of shows have entire casts that are all white, that percentage increases when we look at recurring characters only (29%), and at opening credits casts (48%). Thus, the more central the character is, the more likely she/he will be white.

NETWORK DIVERSITY

- **When the entire cast of a show is included, all networks demonstrate substantial numbers of shows with diversity.**
  When examining diversity in the set of all characters, there is a range of representation across networks. UPN has the highest proportion with mixed casts (80%). About 2/3 of the programs on Fox and CBS, and about half of the shows on ABC, NBC, and the WB feature mixed entire casts.

- **Diversity diminishes for all networks when focusing on *recurring* characters only.**
  Narrowing the scope to recurring characters only, the "Big Three" (i.e., ABC, CBS, NBC) feature the least number of mixed casts (approximately 1/3 of their shows). Half of the programs on the WB and UPN and about 43% of the shows on Fox feature a mix of race and ethnicity in their recurring casts.

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- ***Opening credits casts* are the least mixed and most all white for all networks except UPN.**
  The picture becomes even worse in the opening credits casts, where all networks feature mixed casts in less than ¼ of their shows. And while the "Big Three" continue to exhibit significant white homogeneity in their opening credits casts (e.g., ABC–56%, CBS–41%, NBC–52%), other networks such as the WB (50%) and Fox (57%) also feature a substantial numbers of all white casts. UPN shows a broader distribution with 20% mixed and 20% all white.

YOUTH & DIVERSITY

- **Youth characters on prime time TV are more likely to be white than the overall TV population.**
  While America's youth demographics are increasingly diverse, their TV counterparts are less so. Compared to the total TV population, youth characters are more white (86% versus 80%).

GENDER

- **Occupations for female characters polarize between professional and traditional.**
  While 25% of female characters hold professional jobs (i.e., attorneys, doctors), there are also high numbers for occupations such as clerical and service/retail work.

DISABILITY

- **Characters with a noticeable disability (n=21) are equally recurring (n=10) and non-recurring (n=11), and overwhelmingly white (n=18).**

SEXUAL IDENTITY

- **Most openly gay/lesbian characters on prime time TV are male.**
  Ninety-two percent of openly gay/lesbian characters are male (n=22) and all recurring openly gay/lesbian characters are men.

INTRODUCTION

Children today are growing up in an era of increasing racial and ethnic diversity.[1] In a 1998 Children Now poll, over three fourths of children reported having a best friend of a different race.[2] While diversity is easily seen in many children's lives, the question remains whether this diversity is reflected in television programming. Television is a significant influence, with children spending, on average, about 2 hours a day and 20 hours a week viewing TV.[3] Young people get clear messages about racial and class divisions and their own racial identity through the characters they see in television programs. For example, children see that media gives recognition and respect to racial groups that are positively portrayed. Yet, when children do not see members of their racial group on television, it "suggests that they are not worthy of viewers' attention."[4] With the changes in racial demographics and the steady influence of television media in children's lives, an examination of racial diversity on television is increasingly important.

In recent months, a debate between advocacy groups, television critics, and media executives has begun to take shape around issues of diversity on television. The 1999-2000 prime time TV season became the subject of considerable controversy after NAACP President Kweisi Mfume, in a July 1999 keynote address, described the new fall season as a "virtual whitewash in programming" (*Los Angeles Times*, 7/13/99). The organization's examination of 26 new fall programs revealed no people of color in any starring roles. TV critics around the country began writing about diversity (or lack of it) in the fall line-up, using such expressions as "the vast diversity wasteland," (*Los Angeles Times*, 7/25/99) and "the unbearable whiteness of prime time," (*New York Times*, 9/26/99). Since the address, the NAACP and other groups have staged boycotts (*Washington Post*, 9/27/99), threatened litigation, circulated petitions, accused networks of making "empty promises" (*New York Times*, 8/18/99), and hosted open forums (*Los Angeles Times*, 11/30/99) to keep the issue of minority representation (on-screen and off) alive. At the beginning of this century, a few networks have begun to outline their long-term plans for increased diversity.

To provide networks with full information and to track prime time diversity in all its forms (e.g., race, gender, disability, sexuality), Children Now commissioned the *most comprehensive study* of the prime time line-up to date. Many media critics and industry leaders have already acknowledged the quantitative lack of diversity highlighted by the NAACP. However, a thorough examination must reach beyond numbers to analyze such substantive issues as the types of roles that people of color inhabit, the ways in which their characters are developed,

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[1] According to the U.S. Census Bureau (www.census.gov), the American population as of November 1, 1999 was approximately: non-Hispanic White (71.7%), non-Hispanic Black (12.2%), non-Hispanic American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut (0.7%), non-Hispanic Asian and Pacific Islander (3.8%), and Hispanic of any race (11.6%). Further, the American youth population of 18 years old and under as of July 1, 1998 was approximately: non-Hispanic White (65.2%), non-Hispanic Black (14.6%), non-Hispanic American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut (1%), non-Hispanic Asian and Pacific Islander (4%), and Hispanic of any race (15.3%). All projections show increasing proportions of current minority groups and decreasing proportions of Whites (U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1999).

[2] *A Different World: Children Perceptions of Race and Class in the Media*, Children Now (1998).

[3] *Kids & Media @ The New Millennium*, Kaiser Family Foundation (1999); *1998 Report on Television*, Nielsen Media Research (1998) (children and teens consume the highest percentages of their weekly television viewing during primetime [defined as M-Sat 8-11pm & Sunday 7-11pm, EST]).

[4] *A Different World* (1998).

and the story-lines in which they appear. Therefore, in the Summer of 2000, Children Now will release the second part of *Fall Colors* – a qualitative examination of diversity in the content, character development, and story-lines of selected casts.

Both the quantitative and qualitative components of *Fall Colors* will provide substantial added value to academics, advocates, and the television industry as an assessment tool that measures progress on diversity from year to year and over time. Other studies of on-screen diversity (whether focused on race, class, gender, disability, sexual identity, or age) have been conducted sporadically and have measured one particular season. The continued publication of *Fall Colors* will create an invaluable benchmark, particularly when key decisions are being made during the new season or during pilot/premiere season.

TV programming is central to American culture. For better or worse, its relentless images and messages shape our belief systems about ourselves and the world around us. Now is the time to look critically and carefully at how and whether our diverse nation is reflected on television. It matters to every segment of the audience, but particularly to the youngest and most impressionable consumers of mass media.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Fall Colors introduces several innovative definitions and categories that provide a unique in-depth look at prime time diversity:

1. **Character Role Type – *Primary, Secondary, Recurring, Non-Recurring***
   While earlier studies have looked primarily at leading and/or supporting roles, *Fall Colors* categorizes the widest range of prime time performers, from actors in the opening credits to guest stars and cameo appearances to background characters.[5] Characters are designated as *primary* (opening credits cast, integral to plot) or *secondary* (not integral to the main plots), and then further categorized as *recurring* or *non-recurring* (based on number of planned appearances).

   For example, on the top-rated program *ER* (NBC), the characters may be defined as:

CHARACTER ROLE TYPE	*Actor*	*Character*	*Description*
Primary Recurring	Anthony Edwards	Dr. Mark Greene	Lead doctor in opening credits cast
Primary Non-Recurring	Alan Alda	Dr. Gabe Lawrence	Celebrity guest star in several episodes with key story-line
Secondary Recurring	Ellen Crawford	Lydia Wright	Nurse with no integral story-line; in secondary credits at opening of program
Secondary Non-Recurring	Monte Russell	Man with migraine who pulls fire alarm	One-time speaking role with no integral story-line; in credits at end of program

   The value of recording all of these Character Role Types is the ability to determine where on-screen diversity occurs – i.e., are characters of color in primary recurring or secondary non-recurring roles? By expanding the detailed recording started by the Screen Actors Guild, *Fall Colors* furthers the dialogue on diversity.[6]

2. **Program Diversity Index (PDI)**
   Fall Colors looks for diversity at several levels such as: the overall prime time line-up, the individual network line-up, and within the television program itself. To examine the racial and ethnic diversity of a particular television program, *Fall Colors* created the "Program

[5] TN Media (September 1999); *Chicago Tribune*, 11/4/99.
[6] *The 1998 Screen Actors Guild Report: Casting the American Scene*, Dr. George Gerbner, Ph.D (1998).

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Diversity Index." Each program was evaluated and labeled according to the following definitions:

PROGRAM DIVERSITY INDEX	*Description*
All White	All characters in the Program Character Set *(see definition below)* identified racially as "white"
All Black	All characters in the Program Character Set identified racially as "African American"
Only 1	All characters in the Program Character Set but one belonging to the same racial group
Mixed	Program Character Set includes a mix of racial and ethnic characters that is not all white, all Black, nor Only 1*

* Note: In the case of a Program Character Set with only two characters, each of a different race, the Set is designated Mixed rather than Only 1.

3. Program Character Set

Because *Fall Colors* categorizes all performers by Character Role Type, it is possible to measure specific sets of characters on a particular television show. For example, the Program Diversity Index can measure what diversity is on *Ally McBeal* (Fox) when you look at the entire cast versus when you look at the main characters only. The following sets are examined in this report:

PROGRAM CHARACTER SET	*Description*
Entire Cast of Characters	Includes all the characters on the show – primary, secondary, recurring, non-recurring (e.g., from opening credits cast to guest stars to secondary actors)
Recurring Characters Only	Includes all primary and secondary characters that have recurring roles
Primary Recurring Characters Only or *Opening Credits Cast*	Includes the main characters that appear in the program's opening credits sequence

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RACE & ETHNICITY – CHARACTERS

- **The total prime time population is mostly white, visibly African American, and disproportionately invisible for all other racial and ethnic minorities.**
  The racial distribution of the total sample of prime time characters recorded by Children Now (n=1477 characters)[7] reveals a prime time population that is predominantly white (80%) with a visible African American presence (13%) and an under-representation of all other minority groups (each group 3% or less).

CHART A: Racial Distribution of All Prime Time Characters

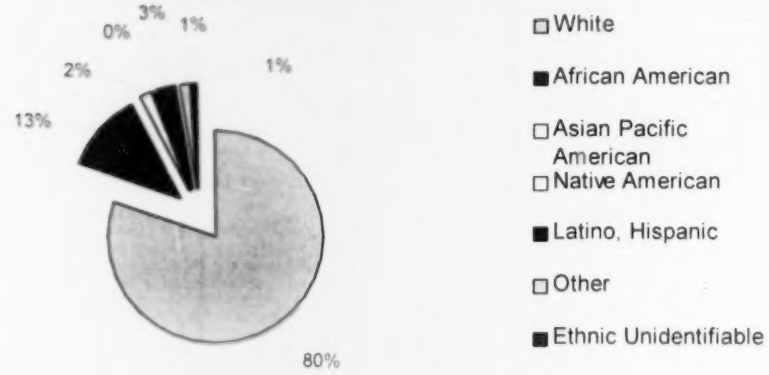
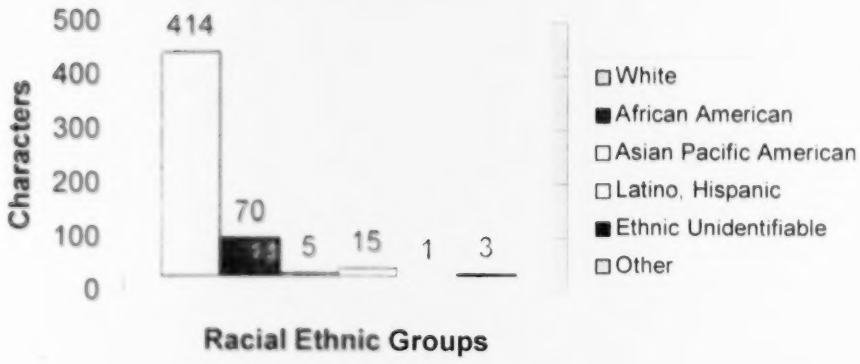


CHART B: Racial Distribution of Primary Recurring Characters (Opening Credits Cast)



[7] By recording all primary, secondary, recurring, and non-recurring characters on 274 episodes of 92 prime time shows, *Fall Colors* provides the most comprehensive sample of the 1999-2000 prime time season to date; other recent studies have examined limited samples of new premiere shows and/or leading cast members only.

- **The same distribution exists among leading roles.**
  Likewise, the racial distribution of Primary Recurring characters (i.e., Opening Cast Credits characters) in all shows airing from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. (PST) on the six major networks shows the same pattern. Approximately 82% of these leading roles are played by white actors and 13.8% are played by African Americans. However, all other minority groups are either severely under-represented (Latinos – 3%, Asian Pacific Americans – 2%) or completely absent (Native Americans – 0%).

- **Racial diversity of characters is not equivalent across the six networks.**
  When examining diversity of *all characters* at the network level, UPN featured the largest representation of nonwhite characters (35%), while ABC featured the smallest percentage of nonwhites (13%), followed by NBC (16%), Fox (19%), CBS (20%), and the WB (23%).

  The racial mix changes only slightly when examining the *recurring characters* who appear on each network, with characters of color appearing most frequently on UPN (36%) and least often on ABC (15%).

TABLE A
RACIAL DIVERSITY OF ALL CHARACTERS BY NETWORK

	White	African American	Asian Pacific American	Native American	Latino, Hispanic	Other*
ABC	87%	11%	1%	-	1%	-
CBS	80%	12%	2%	-	5%	1%
NBC	84%	10%	1%	-	3%	2%
Fox	81%	6%	5%	1%	3%	4%
WB	77%	18%	1%	-	3%	2%
UPN	65%	26%	2%	-	1%	6%

TABLE B
RACIAL DIVERSITY OF RECURRING CHARACTERS BY NETWORK

	White	African American	Asian Pacific American	Native American	Latino, Hispanic	Other*
ABC	85%	13%	1%	-	1%	1%
CBS	78%	16%	2%	-	3%	1%
NBC	81%	12%	2%	-	4%	1%
Fox	85%	5%	4%	-	3%	3%
WB	76%	20%	1%	-	3%	-
UPN	64%	31%	2%	-	2%	3%

* includes non-humans with ambiguous race

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RACE & ETHNICITY – PROGRAMS

In addition to overall racial diversity of prime time, Children Now also examined the degree of racial diversity within each program. This is largely in response to how young people describe their ideal show as one that would not have a cast of only one race. As one Latina put it, *"I think the perfect show for me would be a show that had every race. Not a show with only African Americans or only Latino people – [a show] that will fit everybody."*[8] This section looks at whether this kind of diversity is reflected in programming.

As described earlier, Children Now has developed several definitions and categories that provide an in-depth analysis on the program level. For each program, *Fall Colors* examines three (3) sets of characters: Entire Cast, Recurring Characters Only, and Opening Credits Cast (i.e., Primary Recurring Characters Only). Then, for each set of characters, *Fall Colors* designates a Program Diversity Index label: All White, All Black, Only 1, or Mixed. This complex examination determines *how* diverse each show is, and *where* that diversity exists.

Program Diversity Index & All Television Programs

- **The majority of prime time television programs show diversity in their "entire cast of characters."**
  When examining all the characters in prime time entertainment, Children Now discovered that a majority of the programs (n=56, 61%) may be labeled "Mixed."

TABLE C
PROGRAM DIVERSITY INDEX for OVERALL PRIME TIME

	Entire Cast of All Characters	Program's Recurring Characters Only	Program's Opening Credits Cast
All White	15	27	44
All Black	1	2	6
Only 1	20	27	26
Mixed	56	36	16
Total # of Programs	92	92	92

However, if we look only at the sample of recurring characters, it becomes evident that the diversity in many programs comes in the form of non-recurring or guest characters. Limiting the sample to recurring characters only shows that under 40% of the programs featured a Mixed cast (n=36), and nearly 1/3 featured casts that were either all white (n=27) or all Black (n=2).

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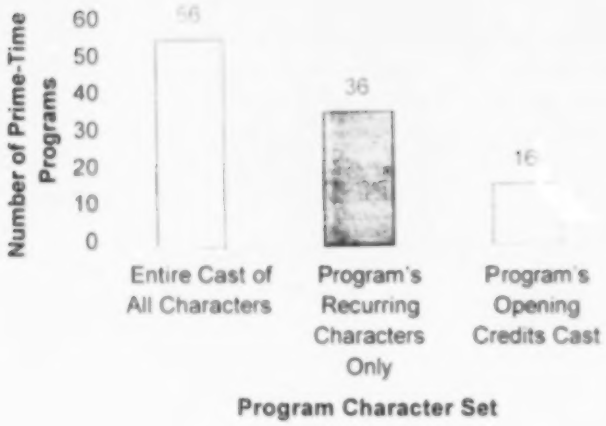
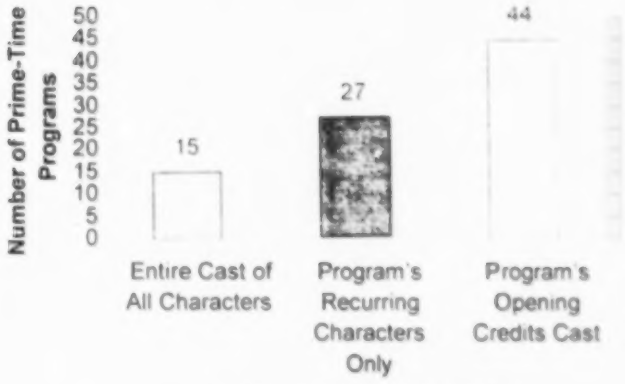
[8] *A Different World* (1998).

CHART C: Mixed Programs on Prime Time



- **The sample of Opening Credits Cast characters is much less "Mixed" and much more "All White."**
  Narrowing the program character set to the Primary Recurring or Opening Credits Cast characters, the diversity of TV characters is much less evident. Over half of the programs in the sample (n=50, 54%) featured primary casts that were either all-white (n=44) or all-Black (n=6). Less than one program in five (n=16, 17%) featured a cast of primary characters who were from diverse racial backgrounds (i.e., "Mixed").

CHART D: All White Programs on Prime Time



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Program Diversity Index & the Networks

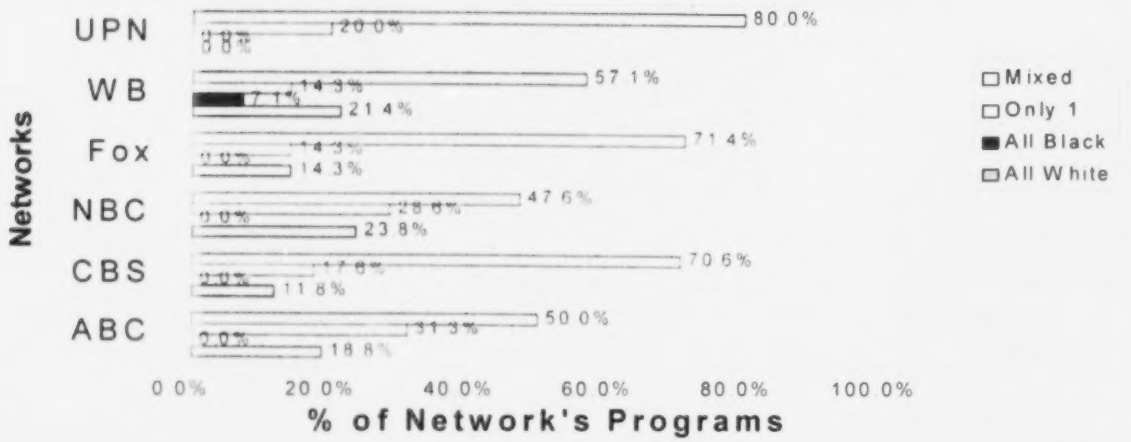
Although the distribution of all characters at each network reflects varying degrees of diversity (see Tables A & B), the Program Diversity Index provides a more thorough and detailed examination of diversity. Using the Index takes into account *frequency, clustering,* and *Character Role Types,* rather than relying solely on numbers. For example, while a network may employ a significant number of African American actors, those actors might be clustered in a few shows and/or relegated to minor roles. Thus, the Program Diversity Index provides a more refined assessment.

Further, some analyses have observed diversity on those networks offering primarily racially homogenous shows. The Program Diversity Index includes such shows, but also includes programs that offer a mixed racial picture. The purpose of the Index is not to criticize all white or all Black shows, or to exclusively promote all Mixed. There are particular production values and necessities associated with homogenous shows, ranging from realistic geographic/demographic representations to positive portrayals for historically underrepresented groups. Rather, the goal is to work toward a more positive balance of <u>all</u> of these types of shows across the networks.

- **When the entire cast of characters is included, all networks demonstrate substantial diversity.**
  When examining diversity in the set of all characters, there was a range of representation across networks. UPN, for example, had the highest proportion of programs with Mixed casts (8 of 10). Approximately 2/3 of the programs on Fox and CBS featured Mixed casts. About half of the programs on ABC, NBC, and the WB featured Mixed casts.

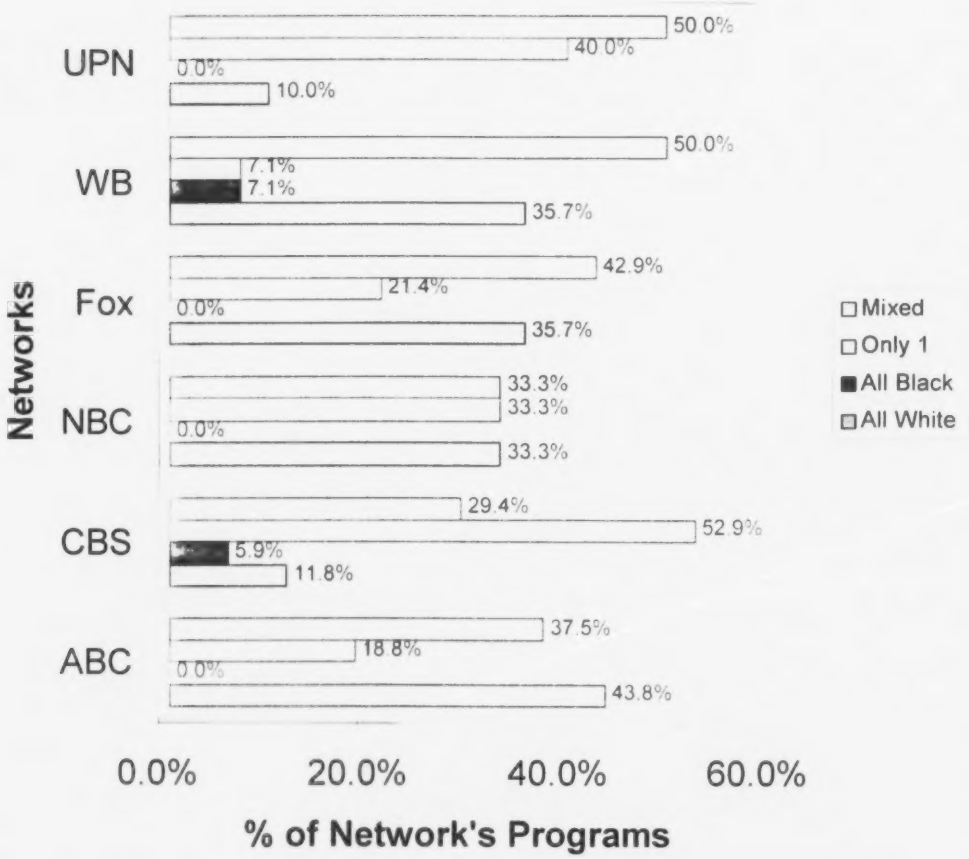
  However, looking at the proportion of homogenous programs, it is clear that NBC and the WB aired the highest proportion of programs with all white or all Black casts (nearly ¼ of each network's offerings). These programs do not feature a single person of another race or ethnicity as primary or secondary characters.

CHART E: Program Diversity by Network (Entire Cast of Characters)



- **Diversity diminishes for all networks when looking at recurring characters only.** Narrowing the examination to the recurring casts only, the "Big Three" networks (i.e., ABC, CBS, NBC) feature the least number of Mixed casts. The chart below details the program diversity for each network, when only the recurring casts of the programs were included in the analysis. Approximately 1/3 of each of these networks' offerings feature Mixed casts. Half of the programs shown on the WB and UPN feature Mixed recurring casts, and approximately 40% of Fox programs were identified as having Mixed recurring casts.

CHART F: Program Diversity by Network (Recurring Characters Only)



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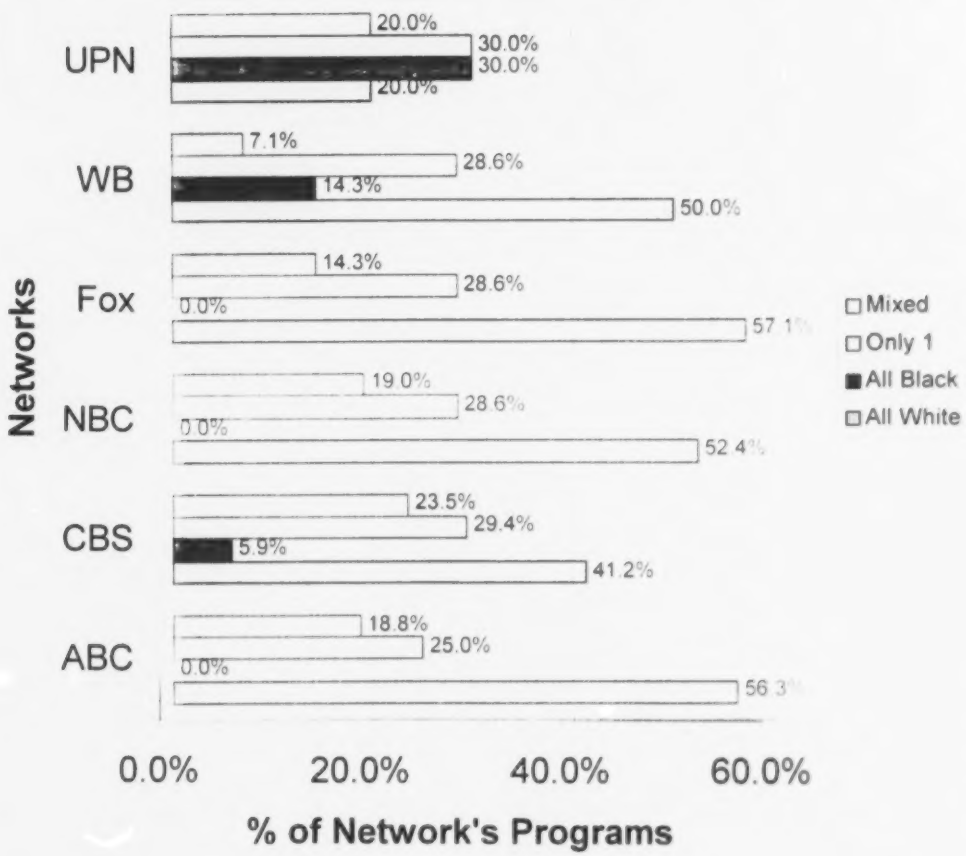
- **Opening credits casts are the least "Mixed" and most "All White" for all networks except UPN.**
  The chart below demonstrates that the propensity toward racially homogenous casts in TV programs is not limited to the "Big Three" networks. When examining the diversity among casts of primary recurring characters only, one-half or more of each network's programs feature either all white or all Black primary characters. Even networks like the WB and UPN, which feature the greatest representation of non-white characters, maintained substantial homogeneity in their programs' opening credits casts. Nine of 14 programs aired on the WB (64%) and five of ten programs shown on UPN (50%) were identified as having primary casts that were either all white or all Black.

CHART G: Program Diversity by Network (Opening Credits Cast)



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RACE & ETHNICITY – PROGRAM GENRE

The types of programs in which racial groups are likely to appear can affect how a group is perceived. For instance, many African American television characters have long been criticized as being stereotypically "goofy" characters, always providing a laugh or comic relief. Examining racial data by program genre – comedy, drama, sci-fi – provides a qualitative look at the persistence of these and other stereotypes.

Examining racial diversity across different program types, African American characters of all types – *primary or secondary, recurring or non-recurring* – appear most frequently in situation comedies. More than half of the African American characters sampled appeared in situation comedies. Latino and Asian characters are more than twice as likely to appear in dramas as situation comedies. The small number of Native American characters (n=3) was spread out across genres. Examining the racial representation in different program genres for characters that are part of the recurring casts of prime time programs reveals the same patterns:

TABLE D
RACIAL DIVERSITY OF RECURRING CHARACTERS BY GENRE

	White (n=668)	African American (n=129)	Asian Pacific American (n=15)	Native American (n=0)	Latino, Hispanic (n=24)	Other* (n=3)
Situation Comedy	41%	53%	40%	-	25%	88%
Drama	48%	39%	54%	-	71%	12%
Sci Fi	7%	2%	7%	-	4%	-
Other	5%	5%	-	-	-	-
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

* includes non-humans with ambiguous race

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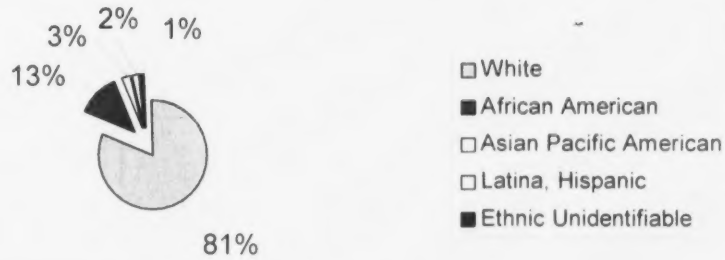
GENDER

Similar to the findings of several studies, including the Screen Actors Guild's landmark study,[9] the gender balance of prime time characters is not consistent with the actual gender breakdown of the population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, women make up 51% of the total population. Yet, in the landscape of television, women are largely underrepresented, comprising only 38% of all prime time characters (n=559).

CHART H: Gender Composition of All Prime Time Characters

The racial diversity of the sample of female characters reflects the diversity in the total sample.

CHART I: Racial Composition of All Female Prime Time Characters



[9] *The 1998 Screen Actors Guild Report* (1998).

- **Marital status was more obvious for female characters than for male characters.** Seventeen percent of recurring female adult characters and 30% of recurring male adult characters were coded as having "unknown" marital status. These data suggest that marital status is more important to female characters' identities than it is to male characters' identities.

TABLE E
MARITAL STATUS BY GENDER OF RECURRING ADULT CHARACTERS

	Male	Female
Status unknown	30%	17%
Single	45%	56%
Married	16%	19%
Divorced/Separated	6%	5%
Widowed	3%	3%
Mixed	0.5%	1%
Total	100%	100%

Further, 18% of recurring adult females and 15% of adult male recurring characters were identified as parents of dependent children.

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OCCUPATIONS BY RACE AND GENDER

The most likely question asked of a new acquaintance is " What do you do?" and the answer will probably factor heavily in an instant assessment. Occupation telegraphs education, social status, even worth. To identify oneself as a doctor or executive signals greater status than a blue collar worker or unskilled laborer connotes. Casting for occupation sends an equally strong message. Who are seen in the prestigious jobs? Which jobs do women and minorities hold? And when criminals and the underclass are cast, are long held stereotypes perpetuated? A 15-year old Latina said, *"When I do see Latinos come out in shows, they usually come out as gangsters, as being bad people. They never show us as being good people, going to school, having a career."*[10]

The following tables identify the top occupations for TV characters by race and gender. Additionally, each racial group is separated by Character Role Type with lists of the top occupations for each category.

TABLE F
TOP OCCUPATIONS FOR PRIMARY RECURRING CHARACTERS ONLY BY WHITE and AFRICAN AMERICAN*

White		African American	
Job	**%**	**Job**	**%**
Professional	28%	Professional	18%
Entertainer/ Performer	12%	Small business owner	15%
Law Enforcement	8%	Law Enforcement	12%
Student	7%	Teacher	10%
Journalist	6%	Student	10%
Service, Retail, Restaurant	6%		

* Due to the small number of non-African American minority characters, this table includes white and African American data only.

White primary characters tend to be higher status than nonwhite primary characters – more professionals and CEOs. Nonwhite characters overall are more highly represented than whites in service-related occupations like law enforcement, teaching, nursing. Nonwhites are not often shown as CEOs or executives in large corporations, but are shown as small business owners (i.e. on *Moesha* (UPN), Moesha Mitchell's father, Frank, owns a car dealership; on *The Hughleys* (ABC), Daryl Hughley owns his own business). The following series of tables shows the top occupations for characters by race and Character Role Type.

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[10] *A Different World* (1998).

TABLE G
TOP OCCUPATIONS OF WHITE CHARACTERS

Primary Recurring (n=335)		Primary Non-Recurring (n=55)		Secondary Recurring (n=181)		Secondary Non-Recurring (n=316)	
Job	%	Job	%	Job	%	Job	%
Professional	28%	Professional	16%	Professional	18%	Professional	24%
Entertainer/ Performer/ Artist	12%	Criminal	15%	Small Business Owner, Manager	9%	Criminal	10%
Law Enforcement	8%	Law Enforcement	7%	Law Enforcement	9%	Entertainer/ Performer/ Artist	9%
Journalist, Media Professional	7%	Journalist, Media Professional	7%	Teacher	8%	Service/Retail/ Restaurant	7%
Student	7%	Small Business Owner, Manager	7%	Journalist, Media Professional	7%	Small Business Owner, Manager	6%
				Service/Retail/ Restaurant	7%	Journalist, Media Professional	6%

TABLE H
TOP OCCUPATIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CHARACTERS

Primary Recurring (n=67)		Primary Non-Recurring (n=2)		Secondary Recurring (n=47)		Secondary Non-Recurring (n=51)	
Job	%	Job	%	Job	%	Job	%
Professional	18%	Professional	50%	Professional	28%	Professional	29%
Clerical	15%	Service/Retail/ Restaurant	50%	Clerical	15%	Service/Retail/ Restaurant	12%
Law Enforcement	12%			Law Enforcement	13%	Law Enforcement	10%
Teacher	10%			Nurse, Physician's Assistant	11%	Military	10%
Student	10%			Service/Retail/ Restaurant	9%	Entertainer/ Performer/ Artist	8%
						Student	8%

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Due to the low numbers of Asian Pacific American and Latino prime time characters, the following tables provide the top occupation data in raw numbers rather than percentages.

TABLE I
TOP OCCUPATIONS OF ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN CHARACTERS

Primary Recurring (n=5)		Primary Non-Recurring (n=2)		Secondary Recurring (n=6)		Secondary Non-Recurring (n=9)	
Job	#	Job	#	Job	#	Job	#
Professional	2	Criminal	2	Nurse, Physician's Assistant	2	Criminal	3
Law Enforcement	2			Clerical	1	Small Business Owner, Manager	2
Journalist, Media Professional	1			Journalist, Media Professional	1	Clergy	1
				Teacher	1	Professional	1
				Student	1	Executive	1
						Performer/ Entertainer/ Artist	1

TABLE J
TOP OCCUPATIONS FOR LATINO, HISPANIC CHARACTERS

Primary Recurring (n=12)		Primary Non-Recurring (n=1)		Secondary Recurring (n=7)		Secondary Non-Recurring (n=15)	
Job	#	Job	#	Job	#	Job	#
Law Enforcement	6	Athlete	1	Nurse, Physician's Assistant	1	Criminal	3
Journalist, Media Professional	3			Clerical	1	Military	2
Professional	1			Law Enforcement	1	Entertainer/ Performer/ Artist	2
Entertainer/ Performer/ Artist	1			Service/Retail/ Restaurant	1		
Paramedic/ Firefighter	1			Domestic Servant	1		
				Professional Child Care Giver	1		
				Student	1		

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- **Gender and Occupations**
  Approximately one quarter of all female adult characters are identified as holding professional occupations (i.e. lawyers and physicians), similar to the proportion for male characters. The women who are not doctors and lawyers often work in occupations such as clerical and service/retail positions.

TABLE K
TOP OCCUPATIONS BY GENDER

Male		Female	
Job	**%**	**Job**	**%**
Professional	22%	Professional	25%
Law Enforcement	9%	Service, Retail, Restaurant	9%
Performer/Entertainer	9%	Student	8%
Criminal	7%	Clerical	7%
Small Business Owner, Manager	7%	Performer/Entertainer/ Artist	7%
		Journalist, Media Professional	7%

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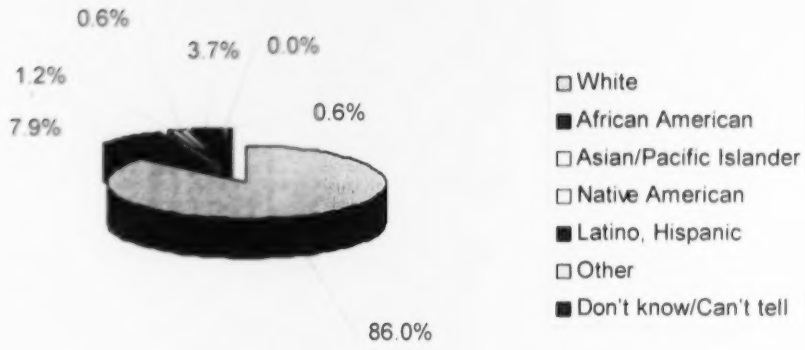
YOUTH CHARACTERS

"Wow, there's no people like me."[11] For young people, the population of youth characters on prime time television may be particularly important because it supposedly represents their demographic. When children watch television, what types of kids are they seeing and how well does the picture reflect America's increasingly diverse reality?

- **Youth[12] make up 12% of the total sample (n=164).**
  Seventy percent of the youth characters (n=115) are part of the main casts, and more than half are secondary characters (n=91, 55%).

- **Youth characters are slightly more likely to be white and female than the overall TV population.**
  Forty-six percent of the youth characters are female, and 86% are white.

CHART J: Racial Composition of Prime Time Youth Characters



[11] *A Different World* (1998).
[12] "Youth" are defined as under 18 or still in high school.

DISABILITY

A very small proportion of the sample was identified as having a noticeable disability. Twenty-one characters (1.4% of total sample) displayed some sort of disability, and these characters were about evenly split between recurring and non-recurring roles (n=10 recurring, n=11 non-recurring). Characters with disabilities were overwhelmingly white (n=18). Examples of recurring characters with disabilities are: Dr. Kerry Weaver on *ER* (NBC) who uses a cane to help her walk; Jake, a newsstand proprietor on *Becker* (CBS) who is blind; and Eli, a high school student on *Freaks and Geeks* (NBC) who is mentally challenged.

TABLE L
CHARACTERS WITH IDENTIFIABLE DISABILITIES

	Raw Numbers
Primary Recurring (i.e. Dr. Weaver on *ER* or Jake on *Becker*)	6
Primary Non-Recurring	2
Secondary Recurring	4
Secondary Non-Recurring	9

SEXUAL IDENTITY

A very small proportion of the sample was identified as openly lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT). Twenty-four characters (1.6% of total sample), most of them playing recurring roles, were identified as homosexual or bisexual. Males make up 92% of the LGBT population (n=22). All of the recurring gay characters on prime time are male; most are white. Examples of recurring gay characters are: Will Truman, a lawyer on *Will and Grace* (NBC); Wayne Vincent, a high school drama teacher on *Popular* (WB); and Jack McPhee, a high school student on *Dawson's Creek* (WB).

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CONCLUSION

Today, Hollywood's creative community continues to struggle with the complicated issues of diversity, generating strategies such as "grafting" additional characters of color (*San Francisco Examiner,* 1/5/00), holding wider casting calls for fall 2000 (*New York Times,* 9/20/99), designing creative job infrastructure for minorities, and purchasing from minority-owned businesses (*AP Online,* 1/5/00). Highlighted by the NAACP's awareness campaign, this conversation has been marked by a variety of voices, from top executives defending their commitment to diversity to concerned artists seeking fundamental decision-making changes to minority organizations calling for boycotts.

Yet still more voices must be heard. The nation's young people are consuming television images in steadily increasing numbers and will soon comprise the largest audience for every network. It is their hearts, minds, and souls that are the most telling and most vulnerable to the power of this medium.

The world of prime time broadcast television does not reflect the diversity that is apparent in the world outside the screen, particularly the world of children. Men outnumber women almost two to one. There are fewer Latinos, Asian Pacific Americans, and Native Americans than in the general population, especially among the youth characters. Prime time has made a little room for white characters with disabilities and white men who are gay.

And when programming *does* include people of color, it frequently does so in an exclusionary manner. The Program Diversity Index – measuring the level of diversity within individual programs – shows that most programs feature primary casts that are either all white or all Black. Racial diversity in today's prime time comes in the form of secondary and guest characters.

These patterns of representation are more than just predictable year-to-year statistics. Young people are affected by what they see, sometimes even more by what they don't see. Children of all races asserted that it's important to see people of their own race on television because, *"it tells children that people of their race are important," "it makes children of that race feel included,"* and *"it provides role models."* Absence can tell you that minorities *"shouldn't be seen."*[13]

So how do we answer the young Latina who remarks, *"Wow, there's no people like me?"* or the Native American boy who says that he see Native American kids on *TV "once every blue moon?"*[14] As Hollywood takes steps toward creating a more inclusive and realistic picture of today's world, it is crucial that positive changes are sustained. Toward that end, Children Now will continue to talk to young people and to provide networks with the best information possible with each year's *Fall Colors.*

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[13] *A Different World* (1998); *A Different World: Native American Children's Perceptions of Race and Class in the Media,* Children Now (1999).
[14] Ibid.

LOOKING FORWARD

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN DEVELOPING PRIME TIME PROGRAMMING

- *Could a person of color play this leading character? This recurring role?*
- *Can a secondary character of color develop into a more significant role?*
- *Does this character's development avoid oversimplified representations of racial minorities?*
- *Do the people of color and women in the cast have a diversity of occupations that includes management, educational, and other positive positions?*
- *Does the cast present mostly Black and/or white? Does the cast reflect today's multicultural society that is comprised of many races, ethnicities, and combinations?*
- *Did we balance the negative roles in this script among different ethnicities? Who is playing the criminal, the clown, the cheater?*
- *Are we paying attention to the roles and diversity of children in prime time shows? Children watch, listen, and learn from the screen.*

METHODOLOGY

This study examined the first three episodes of each prime time entertainment series airing in Fall 1999 on the six broadcast networks.[15] "Entertainment series" was defined as scripted fiction programming in a serial format. The sample did not include sports programming, news magazines, game shows, made-for-TV movies or specials. Programs in the sample aired between 8 – 11 p.m. PST Monday through Saturday and 7 – 11p.m. PST Sunday. Since the project focused on 1999 series programming, only first run episodes were recorded.

All content was subjected to two levels of analysis:

- Macro-level analysis which examined such program characteristics as genre, rating, and cast diversity.
- Micro-level analysis which identified each primary and secondary character and examined such characteristics as gender, race, occupation, marital status, and sexual orientation. Characters were identified as *primary* or *secondary* if they were necessary to the plot of any of the three episodes.

All content was coded by the author/researcher (Katharine E. Heintz-Knowles, Ph.D.) and four other trained coders. To ensure reliability among coders, ten percent of the sample was coded by each of the coders independently. The percent of agreement between coders was calculated. All variables included in this analysis received a level of agreement of at least 94%.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

This method of data collection yielded 1477 characters across 274 episodes of 92 different programs. A list of the programs sampled is included in Appendix A. Sixty-two percent of the sample is male (n=918); 38% female (n=559). A majority of characters sampled were part of the recurring casts of programs (n=848, 57%). Most of the characters in the sample played secondary roles (n=887, 60%).

[15] Due to scheduling changes and cancellations by networks, the sample contains just two episodes of some of the programs included.

APPENDIX A:
Children Now - Fall Colors 1999-2000 Program List

Action
Ally McBeal
Angel
Becker
Beverly Hills, 90210
Boy Meets World
Buffy the Vampire Slayer
Charmed
Chicago Hope
Cold Feet
Cosby
Dawson's Creek
Dharma and Greg
Diagnosis Murder
Dilbert
Drew Carey Show
E.R.
Early Edition
Everybody Loves Raymond
Family Guy
Family Law
Felicity
For Your Love
Frasier
Freaks and Geeks
Friends
Futurama
Get Real
Grown Ups
Harsh Realm
Hughleys
It's Like...You Know
Jack and Jill
JAG
Jamie Foxx Show
Jesse
Judging Amy
Just Shoot Me
King of Queens
King of the Hill
Ladies' Man
Law and Order
Law and Order: Special Victim's Unit
Love and Money
Malcolm and Eddie
Martial Law
Mike O'Malley Show
Mission Hill
Moesha
Nash Bridges
Norm
Now and Again
Odd Man Out
Oh, Grow Up
Once and Again
Party of Five
Popular
Profiler
Providence
Roswell
Ryan Caulfield: Year One
Sabrina
Safe Harbor
Seven Days
Seventh Heaven
Shasta McNasty
Simpsons
Snoops
Spin City
Sports Night
Star Trek: Voyager
Stark Raving Mad
Steve Harvey Show
Suddenly Susan
That 70s Show
The Parkers
The Practice
The Pretender
The Strip
Third Rock from the Sun
Third Watch
Time of your Life
Touched by an Angel
Two Guys and A Girl
Veronica's Closet
Walker, Texas Ranger
Wasteland
West Wing
Will and Grace
Work with Me
WWF Smackdown
X-Files

Children Now

Children Now is a non-partisan, independent voice for America's children, working to translate the nation's commitment to children and families into action. Children Now's mission is to improve conditions for all children with particular attention to the needs of those who are poor or at risk.
Recognized nationally for its policy expertise and up-to-date information on the status of children, Children Now has a distinguished record of achievement in promoting solutions to problems facing America's children. A hallmark of the organization is the broad partnerships its programs forge with parents, community leaders, lawmakers, businesses and the media. Children Now is a national organization with special depth in California.

The Children & the Media Program works to improve the quality of news and entertainment media for children and about children's issues. We seek to accomplish that goal through independent research, public policy development, and outreach to leaders in the media industry.

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CHILDREN NOW

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